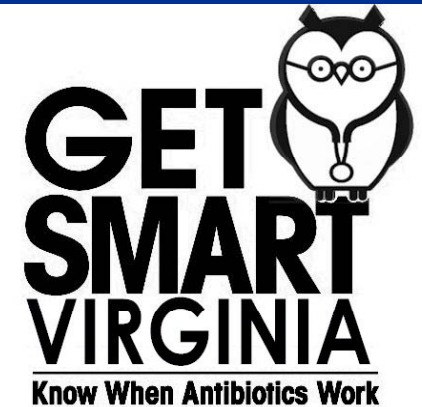## GET SMART VIRGINIA....

- Antibiotics are strong medicines, but they don't cure everything. Your health care provider will prescribe antibiotics only if you have a bacterial infection.

- When not used correctly, antibiotics can actually be harmful to your health.

- Wash your hands frequently and get an annual flu shot to prevent the spread of illness.

Know When Antibiotics Work

USE ANTIBIOTICS WISELY

Talk with your doctor or health care provider about the right medicines for you and your family's health.

For more information, see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at: www.cdc.gov/getsmart

VDH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Protecting You and Your Environment
www.vdh.state.va.us

THE MEDICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA foundation

GET SMART VIRGINIA
Know When Antibiotics Work

Cough, Sniffle, Sneeze.

No Antibiotics Please.

When you feel sick, you want to feel better fast. But antibiotics are not the answer for every illness. This brochure will help you know when antibiotics work – and when they won't. For more information, talk to your health care provider or visit, **www.cdc.gov/getsmart**

The Risk: Bacteria Becomes Resistant

What's the harm in taking antibiotics anytime? Taking antibiotics when they are not needed can cause some bacteria to become resistant to the antibiotic.

These resistant bacteria are stronger and harder to kill. They can stay in your body and can cause severe illnesses that can't be cured with antibiotic medicines. A cure for resistant bacteria may require stronger treatment – and possibly a stay in the hospital.

To help prevent antibiotic resistance, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends taking antibiotics only when necessary.
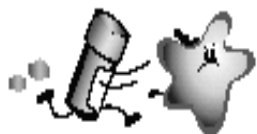
Antibiotics Aren't Always the Answer

Most illnesses are caused by two kinds of germs: bacteria and viruses.

Bacteria cause strep throat, some pneumonia and sinus infections. *Antibiotics can work.*
Viruses cause the common cold, most coughs and the flu. *Antibiotics don't work.*

Using antibiotics for a virus:

• **Will NOT cure the illness**
• **Will NOT stop the spread of illness**
• **Will NOT help you feel better**

Protect Yourself, With the Best Care

Antibiotics should not be used to treat the common cold, flu and most coughs.

If your health care provider prescribes an antibiotic to treat a bacterial infection – like strep throat – be sure to take all of the medicine. Only using part of the prescription means that only part of the infection has been treated. Not finishing the medicine can cause resistant bacteria to develop.

Talk to Your Health Care Provider to Learn More

How Do I Know if I Have a Viral Illness or a Bacterial Infection?

Ask your health care provider and follow his or her advice on what to do about your illness.
Remember, colds are caused by viruses and should not be treated with antibiotics.

Do I Need an Antibiotic?

If you have a:	Do you need antibiotics?
Cold	No
Flu (influenza)	No
Chest cold/bronchitis	No
Green/yellow runny nose	No
Sore throat	No
Sinus infection	Sometimes
Middle ear infection	Sometimes
Strep throat	Yes

If Mucus from the Nose Changes from Clear to Yellow or Green.

Yellow or green mucus does not mean that you have a sinus infection. It is normal for the mucus to get thick and change color during a viral cold.